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AUTHOR Boyer, Ernest L.
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ABSTRACT

Dan Dunham, my Deputy Commissioner, and I agreed on six top priorities for occupational and adult education to guide our administration in the days ahead. First, we agreed that we must continue to expand access. Second, we must have equity of opportunity. Third, we must develop better accountability and data systems in vocational education. As a fourth priority, we must enlarge our capacity in vocational education to provide the most effective guidance. Fifth, we must have closer linkage between vocational education and the basic and life skills. Sixth, we must have a close and workable relationship between CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) programs and vocational education. We must work together to build a new kind of work/education structure to serve a generation of lost students. Today 24 percent of high school students drop out before they finish, often without jobs and essential skills. Jobs for the under-educated are scarce and often non-existent. There is a mismatch between the services we promote and the needs of those who leave school early. However, there are pieces of programs to serve their needs, such as the Work Experience and Career Exploration Program and Title I of CETA. It is time to develop a unique kind of institution to help the dropout unemployed youth. (EM)

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REMARKS OF

Ernest L. Boyer

U.S. Commissioner of Education

at the

1978 Convention of the

American Vocational Association

Dallas, Texas

Saturday, December 2, 1978

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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I'm delighted to meet with members of the American Vocational Association at this national convention.

I'm pleased to be here -- not only because your role in American education is absolutely crucial -- but also because I am optimistic about the future of vocational education in this country.

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I express this optimism even though we have dramatic challenges.

- o We face inflation, which must be curbed,
- o And the Federal education budget this year will confront severe constraints.

We also face the challenge of implementing a new vocational education law -- a law which calls for social, economic, and policy reforms unparalleled in recent education history.

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Yet, in spite of of these unique challenges -- and to some extent because of them -- I am optimstic.

- o I'm convinced this is an exciting time for vocational education in this Nation.
- o The commitments to build bridges between the world of education and the world of work were never greater.
- o There will be -- I am convinced -- unusual opportunities for leadership in the days ahead, and I'm determined to push vocational education aggressively ahead,
- o And give full backing to the goals of this assocation.

I

Last May, at a meeting of your National and State Advisory Councils, I talked about our search for a Deputy for Occupational and Adult Education in my office.

- o At that time I said that this Deputy was one of the most crucial appointments I would make.
- o And I promised that after an interim this key position would soon be filled by a Deputy capable of strong leadership.

As you know, we have been dramatically successful in our search. Dan Dunham began as my Deputy Commissioner-Designee -- on September 12, 1978, and I could not be more pleased.

- o Dan is one of the most outstanding vocational educators in the country.
- o He has my unqualified support,
- o And already he has contributed dramatically to this most important office.

Dr. Dunham and I are determined to work closely with those of you who are on the firing line.

We are determined to support State and local vocational education leaders who have been delivering service for a long, long time.

This is my commitment -- and it is the unqualified promise I make to you today.

II

During our very early meetings Dan and I agreed on six top priorities for occupational and adult education to guide our administration in the days ahead and I want you to hear from me directly what they are.

o First, we agreed that we must continue to expand access.

One of the most shocking statistics I know is the fact that 48 percent of Black teenagers in large urban centers are unemployed and that young people in isolated, economically weak rural areas cannot find jobs.

Expanding access to vocational education in both urban and rural areas will receive top priority attention in the months to come, and Dan Dunham will be describing the moves we need to make and solicit your help -- and advice -- at a later session of this convention.

o Second, we must have equity of opportunity as well.

Clearly the time has come to remove absolutely the barriers to vocational education based on sex. It is unconscionable to me that one would be prevented from a program because of her or his sex. More to the point, it is unacceptable to meet the technicalities of the law -- only to have students feel they are misfits in a program because of sex stereotyping. I know it happens -- but I must urge that this discrimination be corrected and I commend those who have led the way in eliminating stereotyping language, biased attitudes, and the shibboleths in information.

I also know that the sex-equity coordinators in the States are making a difference. In the end, however, it is the State Directors of Vocational Education who hold the key. Without their full and unqualified support, the elimination of sex bias and stereotyping will not succeed. Leadership is essential, and again I commend those who have already helped education move toward full equity for every student.

Equality of opportunity also calls for more service to the handicapped. I am encouraged by the close cooperation between BOAE and the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. Obviously, we have to mend fences right within OE. I support aggressively this new spirit of collaboration.

I also will support additional staff resources in BOAE to promote equity -- even in the face of a hiring freeze. We will be persistent -- even tenacious -- in support of these new priorities because the need is absolutely crucial.

- o Third, we must develop better accountability and data systems in vocational education.

I'm pleased to report to you today that the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee is off and running. We expect to produce information for State planning purposes this year, especially in those 15 States where the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee is operating well.

At the same time, the National Center for Educational Statistics is bringing up to grade the Vocational Education Data System (VEDS). While this system, when it's finished, will require new data in different forms, I'm convinced it is necessary to go in this direction in order to give you the planning information you must have.

This year -- for the first time -- we're calling for annual accountability reports from you. I can assure you that these data are critical. They are the basis for our reports to the Secretary, the White House, and the Congress. And we are determined to build an information system all of us can trust.

Also, I want you to know that the Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education is developing its own Master Plan -- based on these key initiatives. It would be sheer folly to ask plans of you and not be willing to do definite planning ourselves. I have already seen the

first draft outline of the Bureau's plan and can tell you that it will, when completed, provide a substantial basis for the kind of national leadership we all urgently expect.

- As a fourth priority, we must enlarge our capacity -- in vocational education -- to provide the most effective guidance.

Briefly stated -- having good, up-to-date information about jobs and improving counseling is absolutely critical if we are to achieve a new responsiveness in the guidance system.

- Fifth, we must have closer linkage between vocational education and the so-called basic and life skills.

I'm convinced that reading -- writing and verbal communication -- computing -- can not only be enhanced in the vocational education setting, but can, in fact, be developed there.

I am equally convinced that the effective use of language is easily the most important of the basics, because language is basic to them all.

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Vocational education is especially well equipped to deal with so-called "life skills" or what some call "survival skills."

- The simple truth is that students must do more than fill out a job application accurately (although that's important),
- More than keep a useful personal budget (which is important, too),
- Even more than vote regularly (which may be most important, especially if done knowledgeably!).

What we need are skills for <u>living</u> - the kind of skills I see in young people who lead such organizations as the

- Future Homemakers of America,
- Future Business Leaders of America-- Phi Beta Lambda
- Vocational Industrial Clubs of America,
- Office Education Vocational Association,
- Health Occupational Students of America,
- Distributive Education Clubs of America,
- The Future Farmers of America,
- and the American Industrial Arts Student Association

The National FFA officers have visited me in Washington for the past two years. These young people represent exactly what I'm talking about regarding "Living Skills."

- Self Concept: positive
- Public image: positive
- Self-expression: articulate
- Self-confidence: strong but not cocky
- Representative of the essence of Vocational Education: The best we have.

I was privileged, just last month, to visit the National FFA Convention. All of my convictions were reinforced. It was a "special moment" for me, a very special experience which I'll not soon forget.

o <u>As a sixth priority we must have a close and workable relationship between CETA and vocational education</u>.

To put the matter very pointedly, I believe the public education system can and must serve the CETA client -- and we must have better coordination at the highest level.

- o At 3:30 tomorrow at the State Directors' meeting, Dan Dunham and Bob Taggart from the Department of Labor will announce a bold, new "CETA - Education Connection."
- o At that time they will describe the kind of collaboration which will make your vocational education programs a central part of the CETA training program.

Building this relationship is absolutely crucial.

And I'm convinced we must work together to build a new kind of work/education structure to serve a generation of lost students.

- o It's a shocking fact that today 24 percent of those who enter our high schools drop out before they finish.
- o One out of every four leaves early, often without a job and without the essential skills he or she needs.
- o Between October 1976 and October 1977 an estimated 820,000 youth between the ages of 16 and 24 dropped out of school.
- o Forty-six percent of these dropouts were in the 16 to 17 age group.

- By 1980 we'll have 6,500,000 people ages 16-24 in the civilian labor force with an educational attainment of less than four years of high school.
- Close to half (46 percent) of the youths who dropped out of elementary school between October 1976 and October 1977 were 16 or 17 years old. This is a group that has an historically low labor force rate and high unemployment rate.
- The early school leaver is low in self-esteem.
- His or her parents have dealt with the system poorly.
- Very little support comes from his or her family.
- There is no cushion of money or emotion to soften the reality of his or her life-failure.
- This child sees life, not with the vision of hope and enthusiasm for which youth is so prized by those who have lost it, but as a demanding, chaotic, and dangerous world.
- The school is no haven.
- It is a path open to others, but callously shut to the potential dropout.
- School is both the citadel of their dreams and the dungeon of their fears.
- They know that education is a good thing; they've been told that all their lives.

- o But he knows they don't teach anything about his life in there.
- o His reaction to school -- a curious mixture of almost sacred respect for what it should be and contempt for what it is to him.

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Once removed, the early leaver becomes not just a school dropout but a social dropout too.

- o He or she is caught in a wonderland of a fragmented service system.
- o Ill prepared, poorly counseled, out of touch with the world of work - the early leaver is set adrift when support is urgently required.

Jobs for the under-educated are not just scarce - they are often non-existent.

- o Those that are available pay very little, offer no concurrent education - and almost always lead into a cul-de-sac of boredom and despair.

V

Clearly there is, a tragic mismatch between the services we promote and the needs of those who leave school early.

There are, however, "pieces of programs" now in place and the challenge is to get our act together.

- o Adult Education programs offers school leavers GED programs.
- o Armed Services successfully recruit young men and women with the promise of further education. (However, it's true that recruiters still prefer the student who has completed high school!)
- o The Work Experience and Career Exploration Program, in the Department of Labor, permits 14- and 15-year-old students to hold real jobs on a part time basis during the school day.
- o Title I of CETA provides work for early school leavers. Of its over one million enrollees in 1978 approximately 50 percent were under 22 and 50 percent were without a high school diploma.
- o The Youth Employment Training Program enrolled over 230,000 youths in 1978 in work experience. Eighty-seven percent of the participants lacked a high school diploma.
- o The Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Project, experimental in nature, guarantees a job for 16- to 19-year old youth who are in school or are willing to return, and it presently enrolls 35,000 youths.

- o Flexible community college programs permit students to progress toward a GED goal or specific skills while working either full or part-time. It's unfortunate that under the current mandates of the Youth Employment Training programs, prime sponsors cannot enter directly into agreements with postsecondary schools, including community colleges to provide work experience and job skill training for in-school youth. The community college is a unique resource place. Students can get needed instruction without returning to the scene of prior failures and they should be a partner in our work/education partnership.

These and other programs can contribute to a comprehensive program to help the dropout unemployed youth and I'm convinced the time has come for us to fit these pieces all together.

It's time to help the generation of lost youth.

It's time to develop a unique kind of institution to help a generation of wasted lives.

- Specifically, our new system must have a record keeping system for the dropout -- an agreement that some one institution will track these young people instead of permitting them to drop from sight.
- We also need a one-stop-shopping center in every community for the dropout who wants help.
- We also need "Extension Services" for Early School Leavers which provide job referral services, occupational information and guidance, and counseling.
- Above all, we must open up the regular school system allowing for re-entry of the Early School Leaver -- either into regular programs during regular hours; or programs at the work place especially tailored to the work day.
- Finally we need a public information effort in every community to invite the dropout "Back to Learning" -- a campaign to make each one feel important -- as he or she return to education.

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It should be quite clear, of course, that our CETA colleagues should be a major part of this effort to "re-enfranchise" these "leaver-learners." Bob Taggart has

told me that these youth are his primary clientele. We have agreed that many need jobs -- but more importantly, we've agreed that they all must have more education. And I'm saying to you again -- for the second time today -- that our public education system must serve as the delivery system for the CETA client.

Clearly, many school leavers qualify for both CETA employment -- and education opportunities. This means, in short, that the "CETA -- Education Connection" -- between the local school -- or community college -- and the prime-sponsor -- can become the heart of a new structure -- to meet the needs of those who did not finish school.

I also believe that those of you in vocational education have a very special role to play.

- o Vocational educators have historically been community conscious responsive.
- o Vocational educators know how to motivate learners.
- o Vocational educators know how to work with community agencies through cooperative experience programs, local advisory committees, student organizations and personal involvement in civic and public affairs.

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Put quite simply, the Early School Leaver is one more crucial issue to address -- and once again vocational education is being asked to take the lead.

This call for help should not surprise you. Vocational educators have never refused to face a challenge - and in my view you have not failed to carry out the basic charge given you over the past 60 years.

VI

Finally, I'd like to say a few words about how I feel personally -- about vocational education -- and the relationship I see between the world of learning and the world of work.

Let me state the issue as pointedly as I can:

> Everything we know about society -- and about ourselves - tells us that our choice of work, our vocation, is overwhelmingly important in the shaping of our values and in determining the quality of our lives. And I believe our schools and colleges -- except for vocational education -- have been negligent in their failure to confront this essential fact.

We hear a lot of talk these days about "liberal vs. vocational" education, and it's suggested that our academic traditions are demeaned if they lead directly to a job.

Such a view not only distorts the present, it denies the past.

Even that great center of academic sophistication, Harvard College, was founded not only to defend the Christian faith, but also to prepare young men for jobs: the ministry, law, medicine, teaching, and professions pursued by the privileged class.

My point is this: The realities of earning a living have always been a part of the school tradition in this Nation, and we should be honest enough to affirm this fact -- to ourselves and to our students.

It is true, of course, that some work is not vocation, and that some jobs are not uplifting, but degrading.

But our problem of relating work to higher education cannot be so easily dismissed. The truth is that many new kinds of useful,

> challenging, and crucial jobs have emerged in recent years, and yet educators on the college campuses still confer prime legitimacy on those jobs which have been around the longest and which we like the best.

Because of tradition, lethargy, ignorance, and snobbery, we make mindless distinctions between what is vocationally legitimate and illegitimate for our students. Such distinctions have led to equally mindless choices about what we can and cannot offer at the college.

It's all right, some say, to prepare to be a doctor, but it's less all right to be a nurse.

It's all right to be an engineer, but a computer programmer is off limits.

Teaching college is just great, but teaching elementary school is something else again.

To dig the ruins of the past is a respectable objective, but to work with ruined lives in an urbar jungle -- a much more demanding task -- is not so worthy.

To read what has been written in the past is fine, but to aspire to write about the present -- as a journalist perhaps -- is not quite legitimate at many colleges.

What logic is used

- By those who make distinctions such as these?
- By those who guard so arbitrarily the portals of vocation?
- By those who -- by the curriculum they offer -- determine for their students which work is honorable and which is not?

I'm convinced it's time to confront the subject of "vocation" as a profoundly serious course of study, and it's time to make the study of work itself a part of the new common core.

Above all, our colleges should be places where students come to understand that work -- for most of us -- is an expression of "who we are" and "where we fit." "I work, therefore I am" may overstate the case, but it speaks to our condition.

I have always been a bit impatient with the faculty member who says, "I'm sorry. This is an academic institution. We're not concerned about vocational." This same faculty member is very likely devoting every waking hour to making sure he gets tenure. You can't tell me he feels work is not important. He prizes work; he works at work; he even occasionally fights about his job. To say to students "you shouldn't be interested in vocation" is to deny the reality of life.

Work is absolutely crucial, and successful institutions of the future will recognize that students need institutional structures that are flexible and permit alternative demands. This is increasingly true for high school students, who should begin to test themselves through apprenticeship in productive work.

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Two years ago I was on a pleasant sabbatical in Cambridge, England. During that time I read a marvelous novel by C.P. Snow entitled "The Masters." The story describes how the colleges of Cambridge select a master. It's not a very happy story because academic politics there are as mean as academic politics here. But what interested me most was Snow's brief history of Cambridge, which was founded in the 12th century.

In those early days Cambridge was nothing more than a grubby little group of shacks along the Cam river. A few clerics came as scholars. That was the University. There were no improved facilities. The young men who came were poor. They studied by candlelight. They slept in shacks on straw.

Snow asks why they did all this. He then gave the answer. They came, he said, because they wanted jobs!

To go to Cambridge University because you want a job? One evening, chatting at high table, I mentioned this to one of the scholars. He almost choked on his sherry!

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Education and work have always been inextricably interlocked. That's the way our lives are blended. That's the nature of our life on earth. Education must confront this integration, or students will find ways to do it on their own.

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This is the very special challenge to Vocational Education -- a challenge that calls for vision, for persistence and for excellence. I know you will, as you have so often before, willingly meet the challenge -- with hope, with high levels of trust, and with optimism. I'm convinced as we work together that challenge can be met.

# # #